Negroes

Evanston, Ill.,

June 14, 1927.

Mr. W. C. Bechtold, Supt.,

Bureau of Recreation,

Evanston, Ill.

Dear Mr. Bechtold:

In submitting the attached report, I desire to emphasize my belief that the plan if carried out will result in mutual benefit to the community and its colored residents. Your Bureau has a great opportunity to make a worth while contribution both in promoting the program and as a coordinating agencies working with already organized groups.

I shall be glad to work out in detail and forward you the usual scheme of organizing the Advisory Council, constitution and by-laws, if this phase of the report is approved.

I will be glad to follow up in the work of the colored Director, visiting here when my schedule permits, to assist in stimulation interest.

It would be a helpful project if the P.R.A.A. could spare Geo. L. Johnson, our colored Music organizer, to organize music groups, a community choral, etc. and put on a demonstration of a character to reflect credit. An admission might be subscribed which would cover the expense of a four week assigment.

Appreciating the courtesy extended me by you and your staff as well as Mayor Bartlett and other City officials:

Sincerely,

E. T. Attwell

Field Director, P.R.A.A.

A Study of Local Conditons,

with Recommendations, affecting the

Recreational Policy for Colored

Citizens of Evanston, Ill.

Submitted by

E.T.Attwell, Field Director,
Bureau of Colored Work,
Playground and Recreation Asso.
of America.

Auspices Bureau of
Recreation.

A Study of Local Conditions with Recommendations, affecting the Recreational Policy for Colored Citizens of Evanston, Ill.

(by E.T.Attwell
(Bureau Colored
(Work, P.R.A.A.

I have based this limited study of the recreational activities and needs of the colored citizens of Evanston mainly in the leisure time field and the existing play program. There is, however, reason to get a glimpse of other or general conditions existing in the community affecting this group, in order that a program may be adopted to be of the greatest help to them and the entire community. Therefore, while avoiding mere statistics, a few factors may be mentioned probably not technically in the recreational field.

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For the past ten years there has been a steady growth in the Negro population of Evanston, - from about 2,500 to the present estimate of 9,000. In considering this growth, it is interesting to note how it is indicated in the school population, particularly in the district where the colored people are mainly located. The Foster School with approximately 600 pupils has less than thirty white children in attendance. As a part of this total about 125 Negro children added their attendance this past year. This number represents, therefore, the addition of several colored families in the community.

What agencies are reaching these people?

In the religious field, numbering about ten churches and missions, one might agree that their spiritual needs and fully taken care of. Persistent rumor, however, amoung colored and white citizens would almost lead an investigator to believe that the leadership in the Negro church life in Evanston is on trial. Court trials, Church organization "splits" ,- etc. has had the usual

tendency to confuse the people of the community. And less than one-third of the total Negro population seem to have active church membership! (See Exhibit A. for list of Churches)

Fifteen fraternal orders have been organized. They are reported to be operating more as secret orders for the membership rather than community factors. (Exhibit B.)

Social institutions are limited to the North Side Community House, (so called) which functions for girls (?) who are working in the City. They have a building where lodging accomodations for a few women has been arranged for. About 12 women living there at present. No extended community program has as yet developed. The Matron in charge hopes for increased facilities as nearly 22 girls who applied for housing could not be taken care of during the past month. (Note) This means there is no agency in the city caring for the recreational or social work needs of the colored girl.

The other institution for colored is the Emerson Y.M.C.A. While their membership, on the fee basis, numbers about 320, their service, because of limited facilities of the building, seems mainly or almost entirely confined to boys. The gymnasium has been used by a small group of girls in a class but the general use of the building is for boys work. The location of this Emerson Branch is on the edge rather than the center of the Negro population. Among the colored people their is much argument for and against such a location. Those who insist on its remaining seem to be influenced by the fear of isolation or colonization of their group in one neighborhood. This perhaps also explains the location of one or two of the larger colored churches.

There is also a Day Nursery in operation. It is reported, however, that the attendance has not been regular or large in number, - something under ten.

There are a number of miscellaneuos organizations among the group (Exhibit B.) but their program and membership is limited or spasmodic. Some of the activities have more of a social slant for mutual association. The Iriquois Club, a women's group, fosters the Community House at Ayers (NOW GARNETT) and Ridge. Other clubs in this list have once-a-year activities of a social type. Events for financial benefit are common to both fraternal and miscellaneous as well as the religious organizations.

- Delinquency.-

A factor to be considered is the rather high ratio of law violations on the part of colored boys (17 years and under). While the population amounts to 15%, the juvenile delinquent (colored) is estimated by officials at over 50%. This estimate, of course, is on a basis of the number of boys arrested. It does not necessarily mean the percentage of actual crime as, peculiarly, the colored boy is more often detected in groups as participants in the same event than is true of others who would do the same kind of a job - but single-handed. An alarming number of parents of these boys are willing, often anxious, that they be punished by law and "sent off". Whether their attitude is on economic or avoiding-responsibility grounds is still a question.

The officials working among colored girls report considerable misconduct. Petty stealing and sex problems include the difficulties. Migrant girls in graded school, although 16 and 17 years of age; increase in drinking habits; lack of home dicipline, make up factors influencing conditions.

The community contribution toward influencing this delinquency situation may be (a) That in many instances both parents are employed away from home daily, leaving the children free from proper discipline. (This may account for the lack of good manners and poor general deportment on the part of colored boys - from all classes in Evanston - a defect recognized by many of the leaders within this group.)

(b) The tolerant attitude on the part of even the very good citizens toward the presence of liquid dispensing joints, the locations easily recognizable and included in the finest neighborhoods of the Negro residence district. The attendance or visitors to some of these places are not confined to men but seem to invite young women as well.

c) That because the migrant colored youth of advanced age is yet in the graded school with increased leisure or after-school hours much of which - oftimes all - has no guidance or direction through properly projected activities.

The absence of certain agencies among the colored citizens, usually found in progressive communities, is significant from the point of view of developing an effective program to help in the general situation. There seems to be no organized Ministers Alliance nor Pastors Union. This condition makes it difficult a united approach to organized church groups or the formation of a general civic policy which such a union might endorse. Again, there seems to be no organized citizens group in neighborhood welfare or civic activities functioning. This condition makes for good soil for a divided leadership which is rather distracting when one attempts to introduce something of common interest.

This leads to the conviction that any help or cure, indicated after analysis of the situation, may have to be administered rather than wait for the patient" to get together to write his own prescription.

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The play activities at Foster School, supervised by workers employed by the Board of Education, is limited both as to period of time (up to 5 P.M.) and approaching school age children. The addition of a colored man on part time basis under school system this season has been found to be of increased value to the effort to serve the children and the program there.

As an outgrowth of many conferences, with many types of folks in the community, formal and informal, much might be presented regarding the colored citizens and conditions affecting their life in Evanston. This would include their embarrassment and added expense incident to the change in the policy of local theatres, which, they claim, forces them to travel to Chicago to avoid seating discrimination said to be practised here. Lack of welcome in stores is reported in a few instances but this has not assumed a very serious inconvenience as yet. The "old settler" recalls the day when these discriminations did not exist and is inclined to blame any unfriendly attitude on the part of the white population to migration of Negroes from so many varied sections of the South who are as yet unadjusted.

Many phases of conditions are omitted from this report because not directly affecting the needs in the recreation field nor the recommendations, which follow, as a result of my observations. These suggestions are presented with the background indicated in the foregoing statements as well as out of an experience in nearly a hundred cities where a colored population has developed. It is also based on the understanding that the Bureau Of Recreation would be agreeable to a year-round program for the work in the community where

the colored citizens reside in larger number. It would be inadvisable to attempt to help in the present situation, toward the making of a better citizenship, through community recreational activities, unless this effort is made on the basis of a continuous program, - for all ages and both sex.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Bureau of Recreation be authorized to establish on a voluntary basis a Citizens Advisory Council (for work among Colored Citizens) - which group would be of assistance in promoting the fullest participation of the colored people in the year round program of activities.

2. Because special leadership is desirable, a policy should be adopted to budget supervision and incidental expense sufficient to make possible the employment of a trained colored person as Director of a program, - as an assistant in the Bureau of Recreation, - on annual employment basis, beginning not later than August 15th or September 1st, 1927. It is suggested that the Personnel Bureau of the Playground and Recreation Association of America, 315 Fourth Ave., New York, be immediately requested to submit names of trained workers available in order that employment arrangements might be made.

3. That the Bureau be authorized to secure the cooperation of the Board of Education in order that the Foster School building, which is located so favorably in the zone of the colored population, may be made available - under the supervision of the special Director - for such activities as come within the program requiring indoor facilities. Since this building is in such close proximity to the Foster playground it would be entirely feasible to avoid the expense of any building project usually required for Community Center activities by utilizing

this plant, with particular reference to the auditorium and gymnasium, under a schedule carefully administered by the special Director and to coordinate with the school activities under the Principal of the Foster School. As the community recreation program is almost wholly on an after-school hours basis, there would be no conflict as to the use of these facilities but would make it possible the fuller use of the plant for community betterment and welfare.

4. The activities to be promoted in the plan outlined (Exhibit C.) might well parallell the general recreation program now being fostered, adjusting such activities however to the special needs, and perhaps additional emphasis on social and adult recreational activities. It may be difficult but, in view of the fact that so little recreational and play programs are now a part of the religious and fraternal organization among the colored people here, much can be accomplished if the Director could assist them where agreeable in making some part of their activities include musical, dramatic or play programs.

5. An effort should be made to provide Foster Field with as good equipment and protection (by fencing - which is now needed) as any other of the City's playgrounds or fields. I realize this may require financial provision, but it is important to consider this matter because of the sensitiveness of persons living in colored neighborhoods and their suspicions that delay in giving their public facilities up-to-date treatment is due to something other than a municipal budget.

It is my purpose to meet a few of the colored leaders to create an interest in the social and character building values of the recreation plans so well conducted by your Bureau and to secure out of this contact a tentative group with recreation as their special interest. The

appointment of the permanent Advisory Council suggested, on an annual membership plan, need not develop until the colored Director has been employed and is on the ground to work with the public spirited group needed to help in the promotion of the work. There is such a constant fear, in this community among the colored people, that any special approach for their betterment or good indicates a discrimination which they have been influenced to believe is a segregation unfavorable to their enjoyment of public improvements and facilities, that these precautions in organizing plans are mentioned. Their may develop in the intial stages of this program some objectors, misguided or uninformed, but - as has been true in other communities - it will not be long before popular approval of the colored group will show the benefits to be derived from this plan. Without its promulgation the opportunity for improving citizenship, the possibilities of reducing delinquent tendicies, will be delayed. Colored citizenship in Evanston, by this additional emphasis on wholesome recreation, will be made happier, their efficieny increased, - mutual respect and good will advanced. The economic limitations of the masses in this group, - due to a limited field of occupation, - means that municipal help in their recreational activities will make their presence in the community an assett rather than a liability.

Respectfullt submitted:

Field Director, Bureau of
Colored Work; Playground and
Recreation Association of America.

EXHIBIT A

Colored Church Organizations

Ebenezer A.M.E. Church, (Rev.W.A.Fountain)

Mt. Zion Baptist Church (Rev. G. A. Long)

Bethel Mission (Rev. Johnson)

New Hope (Rev. B.J.Smith)

Second Baptist, (Rev. I. A. Thomas)

St. Andrew's P.E. Church (Rev. W.J.Weaver)

Sherman M. E. (Rev. J. Pierce, Chicago)

Friendship Baptist (Rev. John Priestly)

West Side Community Church (Rev. J. W. Burton)

Church of God, Saints of Christ, (Dodge Ave.)

Gospel Tent.

EXHIBIT B.

Colored Fraternal Organizations

Heroines of Jericho
American Woodman
Eastern Star
Mount Moriah, F. & A. M.
Masons, R.A.M.
Friendship Commandery, Knight Templars,
Knights of Pythias
Elks
Household of Rith
Queen of Sheba (Lady Elks)
St. Lukes,
Odffellows.

Miscellaneous

Nyanza Club
Julia Gaston Club
Culture Club
Old Settlers Club
Dunbar (Woman's Club)
Butler Memorial Association
Mother's Club
Boy Scouts (inactive)
Girls Scouts (1 troup)
Pierian Club (girls)
Evanston Concert Co. (W.H.Gill.)
Parent-Teachers Asso.
Iriquois Club.
West Side Boosters.